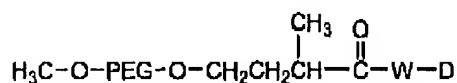


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Amendments to the Claims:

1-20 (Cancelled)

21. (New) A conjugate having the structure:



wherein PEG is poly(ethylene glycol) having the formula  $-\text{CH}_2\text{CH}_2\text{O}-(\text{CH}_2\text{CH}_2\text{O})_n-\text{CH}_2\text{CH}_2-$ , n is from about 3 to about 2000, W is a linker, and D is a biologically active agent.

22. (New) The conjugate of Claim 21, wherein W is selected from the group consisting of -O-, -S-, and -NH-.

23. (New) The conjugate of Claim 21, wherein W is -NH-.

24. (New) The conjugate of Claim 21, wherein D is selected from the group consisting of peptides, proteins, enzymes, small molecule drugs, dyes, lipids, nucleosides, oligonucleotides, cells, viruses, liposomes, microparticles, and micelles.

25. (New) The conjugate of Claim 24, wherein D is selected from the group consisting of peptides, proteins, and small molecule drugs.

26. (New) The conjugate of Claim 25, wherein D is selected from the group consisting of peptides and proteins.

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27. (New) The conjugate of Claim 21, wherein PEG has an average molecular weight from about 200 Da to about 100,000 Da.

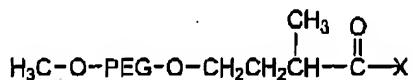
28. (New) The conjugate of Claim 27, wherein PEG has an average molecular weight from about 6,000 Da to about 80,000 Da.

29. (New) The conjugate of Claim 27, wherein PEG has an average molecular weight of about 5,000 Da.

30. (New) The conjugate of Claim 29, wherein W is -NH-.

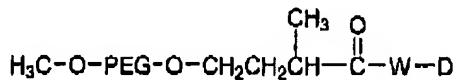
31. (New) A method of preparing a conjugate of Claim 21, comprising:

i) providing a sterically hindered polymer having the structure:



wherein X is a leaving group; and

ii) reacting the polymer with a biologically active agent comprising a nucleophilic functional group suitable to displace X under conditions suitable to form a conjugate having the structure:



wherein W is a residue of the functional group.

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32. (New) The method of Claim 31, wherein X is selected from the group consisting of chlorine, bromine, hydroxyl, N-succinimidyl, sulfo-N-succinimidyl, 1-benzotriazolyl, 1-imidazolyl, and p-nitrophenyl.

33. (New) The method of Claim 31, wherein the -C(O)-X group of the sterically hindered polymer is an active ester.

34. (New) The method of Claim 33, wherein X is selected from the group consisting of N-succinimidyl, sulfo-N-succinimidyl, 1-benzotriazolyl, and p-nitrophenyl.

35. (New) The method of Claim 34, wherein X is N-succinimidyl.

36. (New) The method of Claim 31, wherein W is selected from the group consisting of -O-, -S-, and -NH-.

37. (New) The method of Claim 36, wherein W is -NH-.

38. (New) The method of Claim 31, wherein D is selected from the group consisting of peptides, proteins, enzymes, small molecule drugs, dyes, lipids, nucleosides, oligonucleotides, cells, viruses, liposomes, microparticles, and micelle.

39. (New) The method of Claim 38, wherein D is selected from the group consisting of peptides, proteins, and small molecule drugs.

40. (New) The method of Claim 39, wherein D is selected from the group consisting of peptides and proteins.

41. (New) The method of Claim 31, wherein PEG has an average molecular weight from about 200 Da to about 100,000 Da.

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42. (New) The method of Claim 41, wherein PEG has an average molecular weight from about 6,000 Da to about 80,000 Da.

43. (New) The method of Claim 41, wherein PEG has an average molecular weight of about 5,000 Da.

44. (New) The method of Claim 43, wherein W is -Nfl-.